

Department of Public Health
and Human Services

Section:
NONFINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Subject:
Categorical Eligibility

Supersedes: FS 304-1 (10/01/02)

References: 7 CFR 273.2(j); 7 CFR 273.8(e)

GENERAL RULE -- The term 'categorical eligibility' applies to households and to individuals.

**CATEGORICALLY
ELIGIBLE
INDIVIDUAL**

A categorically eligible individual is an individual who receives or is 'authorized to receive' TANF, Tribal TANF or SSI. Resources are excluded for categorically individuals even if the household is not categorically eligible.

**CATEGORICALLY
ELIGIBLE
HOUSEHOLD**

A categorically eligible household is a household in which **all** members receive or are 'authorized to receive' TANF, Tribal TANF, or SSI benefits. The household is categorically eligible to receive food stamp benefits because of the household members' status as TANF, Tribal TANF, and SSI recipients. Resources are excluded for categorically eligible households, and the household is not required to pass the gross or net income test.

EXCEPTION:

The following are **NOT** categorically eligible **households** even if all members in the household are receiving TANF, Tribal TANF, or SSI.

1. The entire household residing in an institution.

NOTE:

Residents of public institutions who apply jointly for SSI and food stamp benefits prior to release from the institution are considered categorically eligible once SSI eligibility is determined and the individual is released from the institution.

2. The entire household is disqualified from the Food Stamp Program.
3. A member is disqualified for any of the following reasons:

Section: NONFINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

Subject: Categorical Eligibility

- a. intentional program violation;
- b. fleeing felon or probation/parole violation;
- c. convicted of receiving duplicate benefits;
- d. convicted of trading benefits for weapons, ammunition, explosives or drugs;
- e. convicted of buying or selling benefits of \$500 or more; or,
- f. convicted after 08/22/96 of a federal or state felony for possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs.

A household may have non-household members and still be considered a categorically eligible household such as:

- 1. Ineligible students;
- 2. Ineligible aliens;
- 3. Ineligible able-bodied adult without dependents; and,
- 4. Ineligible due to work registration disqualification (not signing the HCS-543A, Work Registration form).

Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI) coded 'SS' and State Supplemental income coded 'ST' are not considered SSI and do not deem categorical eligibility. Individuals receiving 1619B benefits do not receive a cash benefit and do not qualify for categorical eligibility

TANF DISQUALIFICATION

When an individual is disqualified from TANF or Tribal TANF for any reason other than ineligible alien, the individual is no longer categorically eligible. Generally, the household is no longer categorical eligible.

When a 'DQ' for a sanction is entered on the AF SEPA screen for an individual with an 'IN' code on the FS SEPA screen, the 'Y' indicator must be changed to 'N' on the EXRF screen. All food stamp eligibility factors must be reviewed. All individuals who remain coded 'IN' on AF SEPA are categorically eligible **individuals**.

TEAMS CODING

If a **household** meets the criteria of a categorical household, the OPA Case Manager enters a 'Y' in the 'categorically eligible' field on the Food stamp Resource Determination screen (EXRF). If the **household** does not meet categorical eligibility enter 'N' in this field.

TEAMS currently counts the resources for categorically eligible individuals. If a non-categorically eligible household incorrectly fails the resource test, the OPA Case Manager must use the TEAMS work around (FS 400) until a TEAMS enhancement is completed.

**VERIFICATION
NOT REQUIRED**

A categorical eligible **household** is not required to pass the gross or net income test. Resources, Social Security number, residency and sponsored alien information for household member(s) are verified by another program and are not required to be verified again.

**COMBINED TANF/
FOOD STAMP
APPLICATION
PROCESSING**

If the household is eligible for food stamps without being coded categorically eligible, process the application coding the household NOT categorically eligible. Set an alert to update 'N' to a 'Y' when TANF, Tribal TANF or SSI is approved.

If a household is not entitled to expedited services and is ineligible for food stamps without being coded categorically eligible, delay processing the application until TANF, Tribal TANF, or SSI eligibility is determined. The delay may not exceed the 30-day processing period.

If TANF, Tribal TANF, or SSI eligibility is not determined within 30 days of original application date, the household is not categorically eligible. The TEAMS notice of denial must inform the household of the need to request re-evaluation if they are approved for TANF, Tribal TANF or SSI based on the original application for food stamps. If the household contacts the OPA or the OPA becomes aware of approval of TANF, Tribal TANF, or SSI within 30 days following the date the denial notice was sent, food stamp benefits are paid from the date TANF, Tribal TANF or SSI benefits are paid, or the date of the original food stamp application whichever is later.

The OPA Case Manager must review the original application as well as any pertinent changes that have taken place since the application was filed. Do NOT require the household to be interviewed again. However, information must be updated on TEAMS, any changes on the application must be initialed, and the updated application signed again.

NOTE: Tribal TANF and SSI do not have combined applications with Food Stamps. Therefore, the above information applies when notification of Tribal TANF or SSI approval is received.

**EVALUATING
CATEGORICAL
ELIGIBLE
STATUS**

In addition to evaluation at application and recertification, categorical eligibility status must be evaluated when any of the following changes occur:

1. TANF, Tribal TANF or SSI benefits are terminated;
2. A household member is disqualified from TANF or Tribal TANF;
3. FS SEPA codes are changed; or,
4. A new member is added or removed.

EXAMPLES

Example 1: The household consists of Mom, her three minor children, and her boyfriend who is not the father of any children. Mom and her children are receiving TANF. The boyfriend is a required food stamp filing unit member due to purchasing and preparing food with the rest of the household. All five household members are coded 'IN' on FS SEPA. Mom and her three children are coded 'IN' on AF SEPA. The household is not categorically eligible but mom and the three children are categorically eligible individuals. Their resources are excluded when determining food stamp eligibility. The OPA Case Manager enters 'N' in the 'categorically eligible' field on the EXRF screen.

If the household fails the food stamp resource test when all household members' resources are listed on TEAMS, the OPA Case Manager must follow the work around procedure outlined in FS 400. If the work around is used, the OPA Case Manager must retest the case each time resources are updated, a household member is disqualified, food stamp household members change, FS SEPA codes are changed, or the case is recertified.

Example 2: Mom, Dad, their two children (20 yr old son and 17 year old daughter) are required food stamp filing unit members. Mom, Dad and minor child are on TANF. Son is an ineligible student.

Household is categorically eligible for food stamps. The OPA Case Manager enters a 'Y' in the 'categorically eligible' field on the EXRF screen.

If the son was disqualified due to an IPV, the household would not be categorically eligible. The OPA Case

Manager enters 'N' in the 'categorically eligible' field on the EXRF. Since mom, dad and daughter are receiving TANF their resources are excluded when determining the resource test. If the household fails the food stamp resource test when all household members' resources are listed on TEAMS, the OPA Case Manager must follow the work around procedure outlined in FS 400. The household is ineligible if the son's resources exceed the resource limit.

Example 3: Household consists of mom, her child and her boyfriend. Mom and her child receive TANF and all three individuals receive food stamps. The household is not categorically eligible. The boyfriend's resources do not exceed the standard, and the household passes the resource test. The OPA Case Manager enters 'N' in the 'categorically eligible' field on the EXAD screen.

Two months later the boyfriend moves out and applies for food stamp benefits on his own case. The household becomes categorically eligible. The OPA Case Manager updates the EXAD screen to a 'Y' in the 'categorically eligible' field.